

The Book of Romans

Overview of Paul's Letter to the Romans

Student Notes:

A More Absolute Chronology:

1. Paul seems to have stood before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, in the summer of A.D. 51 on his second missionary journey.
2. After staying many days in Corinth (Acts 18:18) Paul set out for Syria and remained some time in Ephesus (perhaps early fall AD 52; Acts 18:19-21)
3. Paul then returned to Caesarea, went down to Jerusalem, and then up to the church in Antioch where he spent some time (perhaps late fall of AD 52 through winter of 52/53; cf. Acts 18:22-23)
4. Paul began his third missionary journey from Antioch through the Galatian region (spring-summer of A.D. 53) and reached Ephesus in the fall of A.D. 53 where he remained for two to three years (AD 53-56; Acts 19:8,10; 20:31)
5. Paul's return to Corinth through Macedonia was probably in the spring or summer of AD 56 (Acts 20:2-3)

6. Paul probably arrived in Corinth in late fall of AD 56, and remained through early 57.

Romans, was written on the third missionary journey, probably in the winter and early spring of AD 56-57.¹⁰

- **Recipients**

The people of the church at Rome (1:7), who were predominantly Gentile. Jews, however, must have constituted a substantial minority of the congregation. See Romans 4:1-2.

- **Major Theme**

Paul's primary theme in Romans is the Gospel -- God's plan of salvation and righteousness for all humankind, Jew and Gentile alike. See Romans 1:16-17

- **Historical and Theological Themes**

1. Includes historical material of familiar Old Testament figures such as Abraham (chap. 4), David (4:6–8), Adam (5:12–21), Sarah (9:9), Rebekah (9:10), Jacob and Esau (9:10–13), and Pharaoh (9:17). 2. Includes illustrations from Israel's history in chapters 9–11).
Chapter 16: Insights about the first-century church and its members.

A number of theological themes throughout Romans:

- Spiritual leadership: 1:8–15
- God's wrath against sinful mankind: 1:18–32
- Divine judgment 2:1–16
- The universality of sin: 3:9–20
- Justification by faith alone: 3:21–4:25
- The security of salvation 5:1–11
- The transference of Adam's sin: 5:12–21
- Sanctification: chapters 6–8
- Sovereign election: chapter 9
- God's plan for Israel: chapter 11

- Spiritual gifts and practical godliness: chapter 12)
- The believer's responsibility to human government: chapter 13
- Principles of Christian liberty: 14:1–15:12

Purpose of Paul's Letter:

- To prepare the way for his coming visit to Rome and his proposed mission to Spain (1:10–15; 15:22–29).
- To present the basic system of salvation to a church that had not received the teaching of an apostle before.
- To explain the relationship between Jew and Gentile in God's overall plan of redemption.

- Content

1. A survey of the spiritual condition of all people: Jews and Gentiles alike to be sinners and in need of salvation.

2. Salvation has been provided by God through Jesus Christ and his redemptive work on the cross. It is a provision, however, that must be received by faith (example: Abraham).

3. Believers are freed from sin, law and death—a provision made possible by their union with Christ in both death and resurrection and by the indwelling presence/ power of the Holy Spirit.
4. Israel too, though presently in a state of unbelief, has a place in God's sovereign redemptive plan.
5. Conclusion: An appeal to the readers to work out their Christian faith in practical ways, both in the church and in the world.

Special Characteristics

- The most systematic of Paul's letters.
- It reads more like an elaborate theological essay than a letter.
- Emphasis on Christian doctrine.
- The number and importance of the theological themes touched upon.
- Widespread use of OT quotations.
- Deep concern for Israel.